

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2428

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PORG, UN

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL RE US VOTE ON PLO

1. DIA AL-FATTAL, DIRECTOR OF BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN FONMIN, TOLD DCM OCT 19 THAT "WE UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT" THE REASON FOR USG NEGATIVE VOTE ON QUESTION OF APPEARANCE OF PLO AT UNGA. HE CONTINUED THAT THE SARG BELIEVES THE USG CAST NEGATIVE VOTE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ITS CREDIBILITY AS MEDIATOR WITH ISRAELIS. HE WENT ON THAT AT SAME TIME, SARG APPRECIATES USG DID NOT CAMPAIGN ACTIVELY AGAINST THE SYRIAN-SUPPORTED RESOLUTION INVITING PLO TO ADDRESS UNGA. FATTAL COMMENTED THIS WAS ALSO NOT LOST ON PALESTINIANS. FATTAL OBSERVED IN ADDITION THAT THE NEGATIVE US VOTE MIGHT PERHPAS HAVE A "POSITIVE EFFECT" ON US PUBLIC OPINION WHEN AMERICANS REALIZE THAT THE US IS NOW "COMPLETELY ISOLATED WITH ISRAEL ON PALESTINE QUESTION."

2. FATTAL OPINED THAT THE PLO REALIZES THE
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"HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY" WHICH PALESTINIANS NOW

HAVE AND HE EXPRESSED SEVERAL TIMES HIS CERTAINTY THAT THE PLO WILL "SURPRISE THE WORLD" BY ADOPTING A "MODERATE POSITION" DURING ITS APPEARANCE BEFORE THE UNGA. HE OBSERVED THAT THE PLO KNOWS IT WILL NOT ONLY BE ADDRESSING THE UNGA BUT ALSO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WHEN IT APPEARS IN NEW YORK AND THEREFORE IT WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO TRY TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE AMERICANS THAT THE PLO AND PALESTINIANS ARE NOT THE EXTREMISTS THE ISRAELIS HAVE DEPICTED THEM TO BE.

3. COMMENT: FATTAL IS MARRIED TO RANDA AL-KHALIDI, A MEMBER OF THE PROMINENT PALESTINIAN AL-KHALIDI FAMILY AND SISTER OF WALID AL-KHALIDI, WHO IS ONE OF THE MAJOR INTELLECTUAL LEADERS OF THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. BOTH FATTAL AND HIS WIFE HAVE IN THE PAST BEEN AMONG THE MOST PASSIONATE SUPPORTERS OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND HAVE ALSO OPENLY AND STRONGLY OPPOSED US POLICY IN THIS REGARD. OVER THE LAST FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS IN CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS DURING THE VARIOUS SECRETARIAL VISITS TO DAMASCUS, AL-FATTAL HAS TAKEN A SURPRISINGLY MORE MODERATE AND RATIONAL POSITION ON QUESTION OF POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING A NEGOTIATED ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT. FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL, FATTAL APPEARS TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AS AN INTERPRETER OF THE AMERICAN SCENE, GIVEN HIS MANY YEARS OF SERVICE WITH THE SYRIAN MISSION AT THE UN. THUS, WE BELIEVE HIS COMMENTS ON THE US VOTE ARE NOTEWORTHY AND REFLECT NOT ONLY THE VIEWS OF THE WORKING LEVELS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY BUT OF THE SYRIAN POLICY MAKERS AS WELL.
MURPHY

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